

HOUSE No. 1219

By Mr. Larkin of Pittsfield, petition of Brian S. Dempsey and others relative to establishing a wireless learning initiatives through computers in schools in the Commonwealth. Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PETITION OF:

Brian S. Dempsey	James B. Leary
Richard T. Moore	William Smitty Pignatelli
Michael J. Rodrigues	Andrea F. Nuciforo
Marie St. Fleur	Peter J. Koutoujian
Daniel E. Bosley	Walter F. Timilty
Thomas M. Stanley	

In the Year Two Thousand and Five.

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MASSACHUSETTS WIRELESS LEARNING PROJECT
IN THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOOLS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. (a) It is in the best public interest of the common-
2 wealth to promote the prosperity and general welfare of all citi-
3 zens of the Commonwealth by systematically eliminating the
4 barriers to academic achievement for students in its schools,
5 including low-student attendance rates, high student dropout rates,
6 low rates of satisfactory performance on assessment instruments,
7 and limited parent engagement in the academic careers of their
8 children, through the provision of personal mobile computing
9 devices to a significant number of students within schools or
10 school districts and the implementation of assistive learning tech-
11 nologies in participating schools to improve student achievement.
12 Innovative computing and communications technologies are revo-
13 lutionizing workplaces throughout the Commonwealth. Through
14 the equitable provision of these technologies in our schools, the
15 Commonwealth enables each child the opportunity to become a

16 21st Century Knowledge Worker, and by so doing prepares each
17 child to live, work and prosper in a global marketplace.

18 (b) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary,
19 the Massachusetts Technology Park Corporation (hereinafter the
20 “corporation”) shall, in conjunction with the Massachusetts
21 Department of Education (hereinafter the “department”), institute a
22 multi-year pilot program to be known as the Massachusetts Wire-
23 less Learning Initiative to promote and provide a wireless mobile
24 computing device to students in a participating school or school
25 district and implement the use of software, online-courses and
26 other assistive learning technologies that have been shown to
27 improve academic achievement and increase student attendance.

28 In jointly administering the project with the corporation, the
29 department shall:

30 (1) select participating school districts or schools in accordance
31 with requirements set forth in paragraphs (c) through (g).

32 In jointly administering the project with the department, the
33 corporation shall:

34 (2) define the conditions for the distribution and use of com-
35 puter equipment and other technologies;

36 (3) support the purchase and distribution of computer equip-
37 ment and other technologies related to wireless communications
38 and learning; and

39 (4) enter into contracts as necessary to implement the project.

40 In designing the selection process the department shall consider
41 the following criteria:

42 (1). whether the district or school has limited access to educa-
43 tional resources that could be improved through the use of wire-
44 less mobile computing devices and other technologies;

45 (1) whether the district or school has low rates of satisfactory
46 performance on assessment instruments including, but not limited
47 to, low Math and English scores on the Massachusetts Compre-
48 hensive Assessment System;

49 (2) whether the district or school has a low student attendance
50 rate;

51 (3) whether the district or school has a high student dropout
52 rate;

53 (4) whether the district or school has a student achievement gap
54 among subgroups;

55 (5) whether the district or school has demonstrated its readiness
56 to incorporate technology into classrooms;

57 (6) whether the district or school has identified methods to train
58 teachers on the effective use of technology in the classroom and to
59 offer professional development;

60 (8) whether the district or school has identified methods the
61 district or school will use to measure the progress and success of
62 the project;

63 (9) whether the district has articulated a plan to sustain the pro-
64 ject beyond the initial investment of a grant from the Massachu-
65 setts Wireless Learning Endowment fund; and,

66 (10) whether the district or school has identified methods to
67 raise matching funds in accordance with paragraph (d).

68 (d) Subject to applicable law, a school district or school shall
69 commit one third of the total proposed budget from locally autho-
70 rized school spending. Additionally another one-third of the total
71 proposed budget shall come from matching funds through gifts,
72 grants, in-kind services or donations from any kind or any source,
73 for the implementation of any wireless learning project approved
74 by the department. In-kind donations or services shall be counted
75 toward any matching funds. A school district or school may
76 phase-in an approved project over a multi-year period, raise
77 matching funds in each of those years and receive funds from the
78 Massachusetts Wireless Learning Endowment Fund in each of
79 those years. A school district or school shall obtain at least one-
80 third in matching funds in each year to be eligible to receive
81 matching dollars, from the Massachusetts Wireless Learning
82 Endowment Fund, the school district or school intends to receive
83 for said year. Nothing herein shall prohibit a school district or
84 school from raising and receiving all matching funds for the pro-
85 ject prior to year one of said project or during any period of said
86 project.

87 No funds from the Massachusetts Wireless Learning Endow-
88 ment Fund, created pursuant to section 2 of this act, shall be trans-
89 ferred from said fund to an approved project for any year of the
90 project until the department, in consultation with the corporation,
91 certifies that a participating school district has thoroughly docu-
92 mented the availability of all required sources of funding for said
93 year.

94 Nothing herein shall prohibit a district or school from estab-
95 lishing a separate account or fund in which to deposit any
96 matching funds the district or school receives for its wireless
97 learning project.

98 Any approved project that does not raise its required matching
99 funds within one year of approval shall forfeit its state grant,
100 unless the corporation and the commissioner of education provide
101 a waiver. No waiver shall be granted for a period of longer than 6
102 months.

103 (e) A district or school may use project funds for any of the
104 following:

105 (1) the purchase of wireless mobile computing devices so that
106 each student in a participating district's classroom has a wireless
107 mobile computing device for use at school and at home;

108 (2) the purchase of other equipment, including additional com-
109 puter hardware and software;

110 (3) the purchase of assistive technologies that enhance access to
111 wireless communications and computing; and

112 (4) the purchase of assistive technologies and technology-based
113 learning materials and resources.

114 (f) The department, in consultation with the corporation, shall
115 award not more than 15 project grants to participate in the Massa-
116 chusetts Wireless Learning Project. Each project grant shall not be
117 more than \$2,000,000.

118 (g) On or before February 1 of each year, any district or school
119 with an approved project shall submit a report to the department
120 and the corporation to include, but not limited to, the following:

121 (i) the progress of the project; (ii) a detailed breakdown of how all
122 monies are being spent; and (iii) the impact the project has had on
123 teaching, learning, and student achievement, including but not
124 limited to any information documenting any improvement in
125 overall academic performance of students involved in such pro-
126 jects, increases in attendance rates, reductions in dropout rates and
127 any increases in student engagement in learning. Nothing herein
128 shall prohibit the corporation or the commissioner of education
129 from requiring a district or school to incorporate said report
130 within a report already required under Massachusetts law or regu-
131 lation.

1 SECTION 2. The corporation shall establish and set up on the
2 books of the commonwealth a separate fund, to be administered
3 jointly by the commissioner of education and the executive com-
4 mittee of the corporation, which shall be known as the Massachu-
5 setts Wireless Learning Endowment Fund. The fund shall consist
6 of all revenues from public and private sources as appropriations,
7 gifts, grants and donations and from the federal government as
8 reimbursements, grants-in-aid or other receipts to further the pur-
9 poses of the fund in accordance with section 1 of this act. All rev-
10 enues credited to the fund under this section shall remain in the
11 fund and shall be expended without further appropriation for
12 applications pursuant to section 1 of this act. The state treasurer
13 shall deposit and invest monies in said fund in accordance with
14 sections 34, 34A and 38 of chapter 29 of the General Laws in such
15 a manner as to secure the highest rate of return available consis-
16 tent with the safety of the fund. The fund shall be expended only
17 for the purposes stated in section 1 of this act at the direction of
18 the corporation in consultation with the commissioner of educa-
19 tion. On February 1 of each year, the corporation shall notify the
20 commissioner of the projected investment earnings of the fund for
21 the upcoming fiscal year.

1 SECTION 3. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the
2 contrary, the comptroller shall transfer, effective July 1, 2005, to
3 the Massachusetts Wireless Learning Endowment Fund, estab-
4 lished pursuant to section 2 of this act, the amount of \$30,000,000
5 from the General Fund, established pursuant to section 2 of
6 chapter 29 of the General Laws for the creation and operation of
7 said fund in accordance with this act. On or before May 1 of each
8 year, the commissioner of education shall report to the house and
9 senate committees on ways and means, the house and senate com-
10 mittees on science and technology and the joint committee on
11 education, arts and humanities on the following: (i) a list of grant
12 recipients, (ii) the associated grant amounts, (iii) the amounts of
13 nonstate funding leveraged for each project, (iv) a detailed break-
14 down of the purposes and amounts of each project (v) the number
15 of students in receipt of a wireless mobile computing device, (vi)
16 any computer software programs used in conjunction with each
17 project, (vii) the impact individual district and school projects

18 have had on teaching, learning, and student achievement, (viii)
19 and the effectiveness of the program, including but not limited to,
20 any information documenting any improvement in overall acad-
21 emic performance of students involved in such projects, increases
22 in attendance rates, reductions in dropout rates, any increases in
23 student engagement in learning, and the possibility of replication
24 of the programs in other schools or school districts.